

Neighborhood Watch Newsletter

December, 2005

City of Berwyn
Mayor Michael O'Connor

Berwyn Police Department
Chief Carl Dobbs



Operation Safe Holidays

The Holidays are upon us. Take a moment to go over some prevention tips before the hustle and bustle starts. Remember that you are not the only ones doing your holiday shopping at this time of year. Burglars and thieves are always on the lookout for a good "bargain" too. Also included are tips on safe home holiday decorating.

Protect your home and yourself, and have a **Happy Holiday Season!**

AT HOME:

Many people like to keep their presents or gifts displayed in the home before and after the holidays.

It gives most of us a warm feeling to enjoy the holidays this way.

However, the time we spend shopping and visiting makes our houses vulnerable during the holiday season:

- Don't keep presents near windows where they can be seen from the street, especially after they have been unwrapped.
- Never hide presents in the garage! Garage locks are usually the weakest locks you have. A second story closet or attic equipped with a good lock is usually your safest storage area.
- Break up boxes, especially for purchases like TV's, stereos, or electric equipment and put them in the garbage the night before collection.

HANDELING MONEY:

The tendency to carry large amounts of cash is greater during the holiday season than any other season of the year. Use checks / debit cards whenever possible. But if you must use cash:

- Don't leave cash lying around the house. Keep all money in a safe place.
- Don't flash your money in public. Keep your bills flat in your wallet so that you can count them without taking them out of your wallet.
- Don't carry a purse; keep your wallet and keys in your coat pocket.

AT A.T.M. MACHINES:

- Use them in populated places and pay constant attention to what's going on around you.
- Try to go during daylight hours.
- If you must go at night, pick a machine that is well lit and visible to passing traffic.
- If anyone is lurking near the machine pass it up and find another.

In This Issue...

<i>Operation Safe Holidays</i>	1-2
<i>Safe Holiday Decorating Tips</i>	2-3-4
<i>Holiday Festivities</i>	4
<i>Neighborhood Watch ALERT</i>	4

Be a Good Neighbor

Especially during inclement weather, make sure to check on your neighbors and their needs. The elderly should always be looked in on.

CREDIT CARD PERCAUTIONS:

- Make sure your card is used only for one transaction; watch the transaction carefully.
- Take your carbon with you and tear them up.
- Never give out any information about your credit card to any phone solicitor.
- Immediately report the theft or loss of credit cards.

AT THE MALL:

All types of criminals work the malls – car thieves, pickpockets, muggers, so protect yourself and your family.

- Try to shop when the mall is less crowded, during the weekday, or at night when the mall stays open late for holiday shoppers. Avoid the weekend rush, when it's easy to lose children among the crowds. Teach them where to go if you get separated.
- Don't dangle your handbag from your shoulder. You create the perfect setup for a purse-snatcher. Instead, keep your purse tucked tightly under your arm, or better yet don't even carry a purse. Wear a fanny pack facing the front instead. Besides allowing your hands to be free to hold on to or carry your child, you'll eliminate the possibility of leaving your purse behind or having it stolen.
- If you take a break in a restaurant or restroom, don't place your purse on the floor, keep the strap around your arm, and also watch your shopping bags.
- **Never let your children go to the restroom alone.**
- Try to make your most expensive purchase last. This will reduce your exposure to costly losses.

IN THE PARKING LOT:

Always park where there is plenty of light, not only around your car, but also from your car to the mall or store entrance.

- Once your car is parked familiarize yourself with its location so you can find it without delay.
- Don't hesitate to ask for security escort if you feel unsafe.
- Use the trunk of your car to keep packages out of sight.

- Keep your vehicle locked at all times.
- When walking through parking lots, be sure you are aware of your surroundings. Walk with authority. Don't look like a victim!
- Have your keys in your hand before you go to your vehicle.

SAFE HOLIDAY DECORATING TIPS:

Christmas trees can be a beautiful symbol of the holiday season. Unfortunately, they can also be deadly. Do not let this holiday season leave you homeless from fire because you and your family did not practice fire safety. Here are a few safety tips to keep you and your family from being a fire statistic this holiday season:

BUYING A LIVE TREE:

- Natural trees should be cut at a 45-degree angle at the base and placed in water.
- Check for freshness.
- A fresh tree is deep green in color and has a strong scent pine.
- The needles of a fresh tree are hard to pull from the branches and do not readily fall from the branches; moreover, the branches should bend easily.
- The trunk of a fresh tree is also sticky with resin, and when tapped on the ground, the tree should not lose many needles.

DISPLAYING YOUR TREE

- Trees should be securely fastened in the holder.
- Keep the tree in an area away from the radiator, fireplace, or other heat sources.
- Place the tree out of the way of traffic and do not block doorways.
- Because heated rooms dry live trees out rapidly, be sure to keep the stand filled with water. Water your trees often.
- When the tree becomes dry, discard it promptly.

DECORATING YOUR TREE:

- Use only U-L labeled tree lights. Indoors or outside, use only lights that have been tested for safety by a recognized testing laboratory, which indicates conformance with safety standards.

- Do not overload outlets. Be careful how many items you plug into a receptacle. Be careful where you lay cords and lights. For added electric shock protection, plug outdoor electric lights and decorations into circuit protected by ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCI's). Portable outdoor GFCI's can be purchased where electrical supplies are sold. A qualified electrician can permanently install GFCI's into household circuits.
- Check each set of lights, new and old, for broken or cracked sockets, frayed or bare wires, or loose connections, and throw out damaged sets. Do not use damaged lights.
- Use no more than three standard-size sets of lights per single extension cord.
- Do not knot or tangle the wires.
- Do not leave lights on unattended. Always unplug lights before leaving the house or going to bed.
- Use only lights designated for out door use, outdoors. Do not use indoor-labeled lights outside.

OUTDOOR HOLIDAY LIGHTS:

- Indoors or outside, use only lights that have been tested for safety by a recognized testing laboratory, which indicates conformance with safety standards.
- For added electrical shock protection, plug outdoor electric lights and decorations into circuits protected by ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCI's). Portable outdoor GFCI's can be purchased where electrical supplies are sold. A qualified electrician can permanently install GFCI's into household circuits.
- Fasten outdoor lights securely to trees, house walls, or other firm supports to protect the lights from wind damage. Use only insulated staples (available at hardware stores) to hold strings in place, not nails or tacks.

OTHER DECORATIONS:

- Never use real candles on a tree or near evergreens or decorations. Open flames of candles often lead to fire. December is the peak month for candle fires, with nearly twice the average number of incidents.
- When decorating the house with candles, always use non-flammable holders, and place candles where they will not be knocked over by children or pets.
- Use only non-combustible or flame resistant materials to trim a tree. Chose tinsel or artificial icicles of plastic or nonleaded metals. Leaded materials are hazardous if ingested by children.
- Do not smoke near a tree or decorations.
- In homes with small children, take special care to avoid decorations that are sharp or breakable. Keep trimmings with small removable parts out of the reach of children to avoid the child swallowing or inhaling small pieces, and avoid trimmings that resemble candy or food that may tempt a child to eat them.

ARTIFICIAL TREES:

When purchasing an artificial tree, look for the label "Fire Resistant". Although this label does not mean the tree will not catch fire, it does indicate the tree will resist burning and should extinguish quickly.

- Never use electric lights on a metallic tree. The tree can become charged with electricity from faulty lights, and a person touching a branch could be electrocuted.

Always follow the same safety tip listed above regarding decorations

GENERAL FIRE SAFETY TIPS:

- Keep children away from open flames and electrical receptacles.
- Make sure your smoke alarm is maintained and working properly.
- Have a smoke alarm in every level of your house.
- Keep emergency numbers near the phone.
- Always call the **911** for any fire, even if the fire has been completely extinguished.
- Have a fire evacuation plan and practice it with your family.

Using these simple rules coupled with common sense will lead your family through a happy holiday season and prevent tragedy from happening in your home. The holiday season is a special time for celebrating among families and friends. The Berwyn Police and Fire Departments want you to enjoy the holiday season safely.

HOLIDAY FESTIVITIES:

The Berwyn Recreation Center

- **Mayor O'Connor's Children Christmas Party:** Saturday, December 10, 2005

12 noon to 3:00pm (outdoor activities until 4:00pm) at the Berwyn Recreation Center, 31st St. and East Ave. Berwyn residents 10 years of age and younger. (Residential proof required) The fee is \$1.00 or a non-perishable food item. The registration to attend is from 11:30 am to 12 noon. For more information call 788-2010.

- **2005 Brunch with Santa sponsored by Mayor O'Connor.** Sunday, Dec. 11th, 2005

10:00am to 1:00pm at the Berwyn Recreation Center, 31st St. and East Ave. Children must be between the ages of 2 to 7 years old. (Sorry no older siblings). This brunch is available to only the first 50 children who register; registration begins at 9:00am. For children, a donation of \$1.00 or a non-perishable food item to attend this event. The fee for parents is \$5.00 per parent. Reservations are a must call 788-2110 for info.

North Berwyn Park District

- **Winter Wonderland**

Saturday December 10th, 2005 at Prairie Oak School, Oak Park Ave and 15th Street, from 11:00am to 3:00pm. All ages' welcome. For information call 749-4900

- **Breakfast With Santa**

December 17th, 2005 from 9:00am to 11:00am at the community Center 1619 Wesley Ave. Registration by Saturday Dec. 10th, 2005, call 749-4900

Berwyn resident children 9 years of age and under \$13.00 / Non Berwyn residents \$15.00
Berwyn resident parents \$7.00 per parent / Non Berwyn resident parent \$9.00 per parent.

Reservation are a must please call 749-4900.

Berwyn Park District

- **Holiday Movie with Mrs. Claus**

The Berwyn Public Library and the Berwyn will co-sponsor a movie "Santa Claus 2" in the gym of the Liberty Center. Expect a visit from Mrs. Claus, refreshments will be served Saturday December 10, 2005 10am to 3:00pm.

- **The Festival of Lights**

The Berwyn Park District and Historic Depot District has co-sponsored this event. Saturday December 10, 2005 from 4:00pm to 10:00 pm.

- **The Polar Express**

Take a train ride based on the book "Polar Express". The Polar Express will leave the Berwyn Train Station and go to the North Pole (Aurora Train Station) Saturday December 10th and Sunday December 11th 2005.

Call the Berwyn Park District for more information on all of their Holiday events at 795-2892 or 788-1701

Special Neighborhood Watch ALERT

Over the recent month we have had an increase in garage burglaries. Garages are ideal places for burglars. They give the would-be-thief a place to access your belongings or to your home while being secluded. Experience tells us that the fall and winter months show an increase in garage burglaries, due to the fact that we are more confined inside our homes, keeping the windows closed and shutting ourselves off to what is going on outside.

Here are a few tips in Garage Security

- If your garage is not equipped with an automatic opener, have good quality padlocks installed on both sides of the door.
- Garage doors with automatic openers do not guarantee security, as they can be forced open. Security devices for automatic door openers are available at your area hardware store.
- Install a high quality deadbolt lock on your service door, one preferably with an extra long bolt that secures the lock to the frame, and not just the trim work around the door.
- Install Motion Sensing Lights

Always close your overhead door and securely lock the service door. Even if you're at home and working outside do not advertise the contents of your garage. Let's Look Out for One Another.